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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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**GENERATIONAL THEORY AND THE U.S. ARMY: HARNESSING THE TRUE  
POWER OF HUMAN CAPITAL**

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Title:** Generational Theory and the U.S. Army: Harnessing the True Power of Human Capital

**Author:** Major Ryan Schrock, United States Army

**Thesis:** Understanding and integrating generational theory strategies focused on capitalizing on the strengths and aptitudes of future generations can yield significant efficiencies for the U.S. Army, specifically in regards to a comprehensive strategy implemented through the Army Leader Development Strategy.

**Discussion:** Given numerous predictions of what the contemporary operating environment will look like over the next 10-15 years, it is clear that there will be no shortage of difficulty, ambiguity and tenuous situations. Couple this with the generation gap has grown much larger and that in five years, the services will be comprised of four distinct generations. Never before have the most junior personnel been more diametrically different from their senior leaders, with those generations in between pulled in different directions. These circumstances together will create the perfect storm, or the perhaps the perfect opportunity if immediate action is taken.

**Conclusion:** An aggressive generational strategy must be implemented starting with the Army Leader Development Strategy. The non commissioned officer education system and the officer education system, already provide the framework in which to jump start such a strategy. Within that strategy, it must modernize the equipment, methods and techniques that are used to train initial entry personnel. Consequently, an equally robust program must be undertaken to educate senior leaders on the benefits of adopting such initiatives and the ramifications for not capitalizing on them. Studies must be done using the doctrine, organization, training, material, leadership, personnel and facilities (DOTMLPF) framework to identify the holistic changes that are sure to result from the increased efficiencies and plan for catastrophic success with this strategy.

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## *Preface*

The purpose of this study is twofold. First it will provide the military professional with a baseline understanding of the generational attributes of the troops within their ranks. Furthermore, this study will make the argument for an aggressive generational strategy aimed at capitalizing on numerous efficiencies. The Army is current composed of three distinct generations, and in five years, the number will increase to four generations. Each of these generations has their distinct attributes, characteristics, aptitudes and motivations. This topic is of particular interest as although some research on this exists, it is minimal and as information related to this topic continues to evolve.

I would like to acknowledge the guidance, mentorship and assistance I received from my faculty advisor Dr. Richard L. DiNardo. His assistance and efforts are greatly appreciated. Additionally, I must also acknowledge Ms. Rachael Kincaid, a research librarian at the Marine Corps University Gray Research Center for her assistance.

## INTRODUCTION

Throughout the history of the U.S. Army, its leaders have worked to extremes to maximize the potential of their troops, equipment, training, and overall combat capability. Seemingly small and insignificant gains in efficiency and capability have historically required disproportionately large commitments of time, resources and manpower. In regards to devising training and the human dimension of the U.S. Army as an organization, the modus operandi and priority of effort has been about forcing new recruits and newly commissioned officers to assimilate into the system. This approach has been used whether it was the most efficient or not, as it was considered a tried and proven system. With the exponential infusion and immersion of technology within the military services, understanding the generational differences between soldiers and their associated attributes in relation to these technological changes cannot be ignored. Unarguably, understanding these generation differences has and will be an increasingly important factor in the success of major U.S. Army programs in maintaining an advantage over peer competitors.

While it would be neither feasible nor wise to cater to fads and the latest trends, a certain level of indoctrination certainly is required of soldiers. Evidence strongly suggests, however, that with a thorough understanding of the attitudes, motivations and aptitudes of the younger generations that compose the U.S. Army, there is significant potential in creating more efficient, flexible and capable organizations. These very generational differences must be properly identified, understood and corresponding strategies systematically implemented in order to capitalize on the opportunity presented. The U.S. Army is an inherently personnel oriented organization, where the soldier is the centerpiece, versus a technology or capability that other services are required to man. This is precisely why understanding these generational differences



more imperative for the U.S. Army than other services that are more technology focused. Given multiple predictions of an era of persistent conflict of small-scale engagements for the next 15-20 years, it will be the soldier that will be required to deal with volatile and ambiguous situations. Understanding and integrating generational theory strategies focused on capitalizing the strengths and aptitudes of future generations can yield significant efficiencies for the U.S. Army, specifically in regards to a comprehensive strategy implemented through the Army Leader Development Strategy.

### GENERATIONAL THEORY OVERVIEW

Simply put, generational Theory can be described as an attempt to put fixed parameters and metrics on an abstract human situation in order to make it more manageable to study, analyze and describe. Generations of people are shaped by events, leaders, developments and trends of the time in which they live. Leonard Wong, lead researcher from the Strategic Studies Institute, explains that generational differences emerge as cohorts experience defining moments in history which shape their attitudes and perspectives. These attitudes, beliefs and perspectives form their peoples' schemas, or their predisposed beliefs in how they perceive situations.<sup>1</sup> Although there is not an agreed upon definition, the American Heritage Dictionary provides a loose definition of generation that provides an adequate baseline for the purposes of this study: <sup>2</sup>

1. A group of individuals born and living about the same time.
2. A group of generally contemporaneous individuals regarded as having common cultural or social characteristics and attitudes.
3. A stage or period of sequential technological development and innovation.
4. A class of [subjects] derived from a preceding class.

### Significance of Understanding Generational Theory

Simply put, different generations are significantly different in the way they think, perceive learn and act. These differences should not be minimalized. Younger generations learn, think

and perceive problems and situations in very different ways than do older generations. Their aptitudes and strengths are fundamentally different than those of soldiers 30 years ago.

Naturally, people become defensive when they are threatened by something that they do not understand. Innovations and shifts in thinking have historically been initially perceived poorly by older generations. Applying this mode of understanding to major Army programs such as the leader development strategy, the impacts are potentially significant in terms of fiscal savings and in an array of increased efficiencies.

It would be irresponsible to assert that 100% of Baby Boomers for example, born between 1946 and 1964, possess all of the qualities depicted of that generation or any other generation. Furthermore it would be impossible to reach a statistical conclusion on anything associated with generational theory. While it is certainly academically prudent to disclose that generational theory is not a hard science, the intent in this study is not to stereotype recklessly anyone to suit the needs of this study. However, numerous objective research projects and thorough studies do strongly suggest that the overwhelming majority of people within a generation exhibit the characteristics and beliefs attributed to their generations as a result of shared experiences and life changing events. Furthermore, as many cutting edge leading companies such as Google, Apple and Merrill Lynch have recognized, there are unarguably strong correlations that suggest that generational understanding is a relatively inexpensive and fast in creating more efficient and effective organizations.<sup>3</sup>

To illustrate a brief example of significance and potential efficiencies in application, a pilot test called Exposure to Digital Applications was conducted with the U.S. Army's 6<sup>th</sup> Air Defense Artillery Brigade at Fort Bliss, Texas in 2009. Recognizing that new recruits reporting for training were different in their learning abilities and that they readily accepted and responded

well to digital media, leaders at Fort Bliss sought to capitalize on these generational differences. The overall concept of the program was to issue each Advanced Individual Training (AIT) Soldier an Apple IPOD preloaded with all of the prerequisite training a Patriot AIT Soldier requires loaded onto the IPOD as a cartoon based video trainer. The scenarios were interactive that provided instant feedback to the Soldier that he was either making the correct decision and why, or that he made the incorrect decision and went further to describe to the user why the decision was wrong. The program allowed the soldier to go back correct his mistake then move on to the next task. The results of the test pilot were extraordinary. After several iterations, the Brigade Commander concluded that with proper implementation, he could graduate Patriot AIT classes at least two weeks earlier and with higher scores than with traditional methods they had employed in the past.

The significance to this is an undisputable reduction in the time it takes to produce far better trained Soldiers for tactical units. Furthermore the cost savings in reduced training times, and force structure of supreme importance when total force structures are constantly being reviewed and constrained. If it were considered to take a concept such as this and implement it across the U.S. Army in all AIT training, the results certainly would be revolutionary. Additionally, this concept could be also further developed to attain similar results in recruit basic training, officer basic training, noncommissioned officer training and also advanced officer training. The key point to understand here is that if you understand future generations and their schemas, aptitudes and strengths, the better they will be understood and more likely an organization is to capitalize on the future.<sup>4</sup>

## AN OVERVIEW OF THE GENERATIONS THAT COMPRISE THE U.S. ARMY

### The Baby Boom Generation

This generation, also known as the Cold War Generation and the Growth Economy Generation, comprises of the 77.2 million Americans that were born following World War II the 19 years between 1946 and 1964.<sup>5</sup> Translating their associated career paths and timelines into today's officer and non-commissioned officer ranks, these are today's colonels and up to four star generals. For enlisted soldiers, they are today's brigade-level command sergeants major up to and including the Command Sergeant Major of the Army. This generation unarguably holds the highest positions of authority and is responsible for the direction of major decisions in today's Army, and likely will continue to do so for the next five to ten years.

In terms of interfacing with younger soldiers, due to their senior status, Baby Boomers mostly interact with other Baby Boomers with equal or similar seniority and also largely with Generation X, of which whom most of their subordinate staffs are comprised. It is doubtful that across the Army, Baby Boomers regularly interact with large numbers Generation Y Soldiers (Captain and Staff Sergeant and below) on a regular basis. This is potentially problematic in that unique to today, more so than before, there are three distinct generations within the U.S. Army, where those in power and authority have little interaction and a lesser understanding of the attributes, schemas and motivations of the youngest generation that comprises nearly 60% of the force. This is a critical aspect to highlight, as the perceived generation gap is larger now than it has been in over 20 years.<sup>6</sup> This is more significant than ever before as technology continues to change the Army at a rapid pace, the key to harnessing the full benefits and efficiencies of this new technology is the human dimension.

The Baby Boomers were born in a time of relative prosperity against a backdrop of rebellion and indulgence.<sup>7</sup> The strong economy gave families of Baby Boomers the confidence to have several children and maintain larger families than what was the historical norm. The average for them was 3.7 children per family in 1957 and the trend continued until the mid 1960's. Baby Boomers as children enjoyed a prolonged childhood as compared to their parents as they were able to stay in school longer than ever before. Baby Boomers were considered a threat to their elders due to their attitudes and indulgent lifestyles and prolonged adolescence.<sup>8</sup> The 1950's and 1960's were regarded as a time of optimism and hope which was ingrained into their upbringings, attitudes and schemas.

One of the most significant impacts that shaped the Baby Boomer as children was the television. By 1958, over 83% of American families had a television, clearly making it the most powerful communication technology available.<sup>9</sup> The television allowed parents to turn youth into an event, and with cultural phenomena such as Rock n Roll and popular television shows, schemas changed rapidly. The television enabled millions of Baby Boomers as children and adolescents to watch the first man reach outer space and later walk on the moon. Later as the Baby Boomers reached adulthood, the television became a mobilizer for movements such as anti-war rallies against the Vietnam War. Leonard Wong concisely characterizes the baby Boomers as follows:<sup>10</sup>

Their views were shaped by events such as Vietnam, Woodstock, the Kennedy assassination, and Kent State. A Boomer childhood consisted of a nuclear family where Dad worked and Mom stayed at home. These parents doted on the young Boomers and viewed them as the generation that was going to change the world. At school, they learned to "work well with others" since the sheer numbers of their generation overwhelmed school systems and necessitated teamwork and collaboration. They entered adulthood optimistic and driven. In the workforce, Boomers worked relentlessly in pursuit of goals, often at the expense of marriages, family, and personal lives. Boomer women began to enter the workforce as the influence of the feminist movement grew and reinforced the independence characterized by Boomers. Day care and nannies allowed both Boomer parents to work tiring, yet supposedly fulfilling, 60-hour

workweeks. Work became more than just putting food on the table; it became their *raison d'être*.

## Generation X

This generation, also often referred to as the Baby Bust Generation, lasted twelve years and comprises of the approximately 44.9 million Americans born between January 1965 and December 1976.<sup>11</sup> Generation X in terms of population and rank density in today's Army, range from Major up to Brigadier General and from Sergeant First Class to Sergeant Major for the enlisted ranks. In today's Army, Generation X more so than Baby Boomers or Generation Y are in a precarious position situation in time and position between the Baby Boomers and Generation Y who in terms of ideals, attributes and schemas are significantly different than perhaps any other two coexisting generations in recent history must as a result of the rapid increase of technology. This is important to highlight as Generation X will continue to bridge the gap between the Baby Boomers and Generation Y for the next 5-10 years. Accordingly, it will become critical for Generation X to learn about, study and understand the Net Generation, those born in the year 1998 and later, as they will begin to enter military service in just five years. It is significant to note that for a short period of time in approximately five years, the U.S. Army will be comprise of 4 distinct generations, all their own attributes and schemas, including Baby Boomers (1946-1964), Generation X (1964-1977), Generation Y 1977-1997 and the Net Generation.

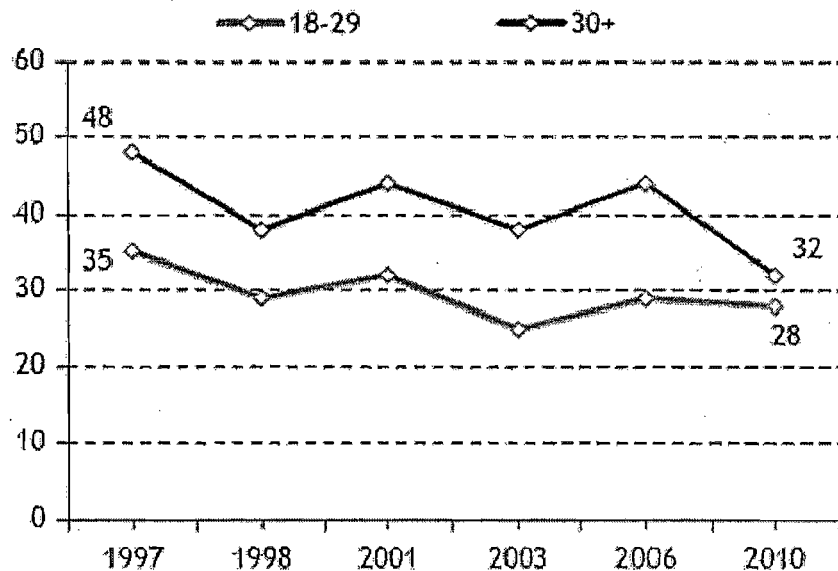
Baby Boomers consider Generation X to be overly cynical, independent minded and difficult to reach.<sup>12</sup> In the 10 years following the Baby Boom, birth rates declined dramatically. Due to political unrest of the times and economic pressures families started getting smaller, Generation X children often felt excluded from society. As they entered adulthood, they found it very

difficult to find a good job as a result of the swollen ranks of Baby Boomers. As a result, Generation X entered the workforce as the most educated to date yet with the lowest salaries comparatively since the Great depression of the 1930's.<sup>13</sup> Leong Wong characterizes Generation X in the following passage:<sup>14</sup>

Generation X developed a cynical, pragmatic, survivor mentality less idyllic than their Boomer predecessors. With Boomer parents overworked and focused on accomplishing personal goals, Generation X children were often neglected and overlooked. Generation X did not have the nurturing environment enjoyed by the Boomers. Instead, visitation rights and joint custody became the norm as over 40 percent spent time in a single-parent home by age 16. Generation X became the ultimate latchkey children. Being alone and fending on their own, they learned to rely on themselves and developed a confidence often misinterpreted as arrogance. Generation X developed a skeptical nature about authority as people and institutions around them let them down repeatedly. They watched one president resign in disgrace and another defend himself by examining the definition of "is." Whereas the Boomers' hopes soared eternal with the 7 first lunar landing, Generation X's hopes were shattered as they watched the Challenger explode on their schoolroom TV screens. They waited for the "quality time" with their parents that seldom came and learned to trust only themselves.

### Measuring Social Trust

% who say most people can be trusted



Source: Data from 1997 through 2006 are from surveys conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press.

PewResearchCenter

Figure 1: Pew Research Center

## Generation Y

This generation, often also referred to as Generation Me, Echo Boomers or as the Millennials, comprises of the 81 million Americans born between January 1977 through December 1997.<sup>15</sup> The millennial generation today, ranges from the rank of Second Lieutenant up to Major and Private to Sergeant Major for the enlisted ranks, and will continue to be the main recruiting base for approximately the next five years, until Generation Next comes of age for military service in 2015. Today, these are the Soldiers at ground level executing counter insurgency campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan. In large part, Generation Y executes the policies and direction of the senior Baby Boomers, but answers to and works for Generation X. This can lead to an environment of misunderstanding as Generation Y fundamentally perceives things different than Generation X, and much different from the Baby Boomers as will be presented in the following passages.

Birth rates began to increase in the early 1980s due to a favorable economy and Baby Boomer women having children well into their 30's and 40's due to their historically later start in adulthood, which is known as the echo to the Baby Boom.<sup>16</sup> As a result of their parents being older and more financially established yet still very much engrossed in their own work lives, Generation Y children were raised in much more of a lavish and materialistic manner than had

**Millennials Outpace Older Americans in Technology Use**

	Millennial (18-29)	Gen X (30-45)	Boomer (46-64)	Silent (65+)
<b>Internet behaviors</b>	%	%	%	%
Created social networking profile	75	50	30	6
Wireless internet away from home	62	48	35	11
Posted video of themselves online	20	6	2	1
Use Twitter	14	10	6	1
<b>Cell phones and texting</b>				
Use cell to text	88	77	51	9
Texted in past 24 hours	80	63	35	4
Texted while driving	64	46	21	1
Have a cell phone/no landline	41	24	13	5
Median # texts in past 24 hours	20	12	5	--



## Figure 2 Pew Research Center

preceding generations. To compound this phenomenon, the extraordinary economy in the 1990s compounded the overwhelming perception of prosperity. Former Chairman of the Federal Reserve, Allen Greenspan, a devote Baby Boomer in age and in fiscal characteristic, was quoted as saying the following about Generation Y, "...their [Generation Y] upbringing was overly and irrationally exuberant." <sup>17</sup>

Considering the social ramifications of their childhood, Generation Y was to be the first generation that by in large grew up surrounded by digital media, and for the most part has used the internet and social media for most of their lives. Generational expert Don Tapscott succinctly summarizes this concept when he asserts, "Today's kids [Generation Y] are so bathed in bits [digital media and technology] they think it's all part of the natural landscape."<sup>18</sup> Generation Y relates to technology much better than earlier generations, as they are more comfortable, knowledgeable, and literate than their parents.<sup>19</sup> This same concept is what enabled the Brigade Commander to succeed so well in his AIT Exposure to Digital Media training program discussed earlier. Due to their parents still hard at work, Generation Y spent hours in daycare centers and in afterschool programs, and as a result, are much more comfortable in social environments and meeting new people.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, specific to Generation Y, the generation favors and excels in student focused education model versus the teacher focused environment. Student focused education is a model where students are broken into groups where the teacher facilitates the students learning on their own. This generation approaches work in a much more collaborative approach, collapsing the rigid hierarchy imposed and favored by Baby Boomers.<sup>21</sup>

Generational theory expert Morris Massey believes along with many other theorists that childhood is a critical time in the development of schemas, “our value systems are set in childhood and change very little thereafter.”<sup>22</sup> Life shaping events have changed the way Generation Y views things and approaches problems such as the OJ Simpson ordeal, Columbine School Massacre, the Exxon Valdez and deepwater oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, Hurricane Katrina and most notably the 9/11 terrorist attacks. As a result of the broad themes of their childhood that they were raised to exhibit extremely high self esteems by constantly being affirmed that they are special and can do anything they set their minds to and that they should follow their dreams, Generation Y is widely viewed as being self centered and willing to readily question authority.<sup>23</sup> This signifies a significant shift in societal rules and norms from the previous generations and as a result, Generation Y breaks from Generation X in that they are increasingly color blind in regards to race and less concerned with gender roles and sexual orientation.<sup>24</sup> This shift in perceptions could largely be a result that this generation is the most racially diverse in American history, one of every three are a member of a minority group.<sup>25</sup>

Seeking fulfillment in their jobs much like the baby Boomers, Generation Y expect success at everything they do, however they expect to achieve it quickly, which often leads to a sense of disappointment.<sup>26</sup> Having a misplaced sense of entitlement, lack of loyalty, lack of respect for established authority, and an overall focus on self, Generation Y overtly believes it is perfectly normal to be different and rebel against the norm.<sup>27</sup> Disappointed and frustrated with circumstances as young adults much like Generation X, the barriers into middle class life as adults have been extremely high as a result of the soaring costs of advanced education, cost of living and other basic requirements such as healthcare.<sup>28</sup>

## Generation Next

Also known as the Dreamer Generation, Generation Z or the Internet Generation or as the I-Generation, the Next Generation ranges from those born in 1997 to the present. This distinct group of individuals comprises of approximately 40 million Americans born in a digitally mature environment.<sup>29</sup> While it remains to be seen what effects will result, Generation Next are the children of Generation X and the older members of Generation Y, birthrates in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century have declined. The decreased birthrates are likely as a result of the uncertainty associated with the War on Terror, political discourse and an extremely burdened and declining economy and high unemployment.<sup>30</sup> To further complicate the rising cost of living, education and basic necessities have continued to increase well into the first ten years of the new millennium. If history is any indication of future trends, the Next Generation will likely exhibit a more conservative and reserved adjustment than Generation Y, likely more aligned with the traits Generation X exhibits.

The Next Generation will begin to enter military service in as early as five years; likely in a very complicated, ambiguous environment with three distinct preceding generations tiered over them. Their entry into military service will certainly be in a budget constrained environment which we are just now entering in 2011. However, the most significant dynamic which will characterize Generation Next's service will be their ability to harness and implement new technologies regardless of career field, rank or position. The key to capitalizing on their immense potential is the early identification of those traits and dispositions they will bring with them into military service in relation technology and tailoring their training to capitalize on it.

Characteristics unique to this generation are their complete immersion in advanced technology, earning them the first to bear the nickname of "digital natives". As Joe Purser stated

in the Future of the Joint Operating Environment, “We tend to overestimate short term change [of technology] and underestimate long term change [of technology].”<sup>31</sup> Although Generation X and more so Generation Y are certainly fluent and immersed in technology, their entry into military service was characterized largely by technology and systems dated from the early 1990s. This will not be the case for Generation Next, as digital connectively modernizations are already largely underway throughout the armed services.<sup>32</sup> Having been raised completely immersed in handheld technology, they tend to be impatient and possess an inability to comprehend waiting for something or working towards something in the future. They arguably have been busier as children than preceding generations, having busy schedules filled with afterschool activities, sports and social activities. Generation Next’s knowledge and perception of events such as the 9/11 terrorist attacks are as result of stories from their parents or what they have read online, as they are already digitally connected. To further progress on the social advancements of Generation Y, the Next Generation witnessed the election of the first African American President of the United States as children, so likely there will be even less emphasis given to race, religion or sex.

## GENERATIONAL THEORY AND THE LEADER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Considering the challenges that lay ahead of the U.S. Army in the coming years, identifying the key attributes of the human dimension in regards to generation differences must be a key factor in the Army Leader Development Strategy. This is the best place to implement generational theory strategies. The Army leader Development Strategy is a ten page document that is developed by the Commander of the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) and ultimately approved by the Chief of Staff of the Army. As published in the 2010 Joint Operating Environment publication by the Joint Forces Command, all predictions

suggest an era of persistent conflict, continued deployment of significant numbers of troops deployed all of which during a certain budget constrained environment.<sup>33</sup> According to the U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, the purpose of the Army Leader Development Strategy is as follows:

The Army Leader Development provides the framework to develop agile, adaptive, and innovative leaders for our Army within a flexible, relevant, and enduring framework. An uncertain and complex future security environment demands that Army leader development prepare leaders to operate with competence and confidence in ambiguous, frequently changing circumstances. Our leaders deserve the best possible leader development process to enable them to effectively lead our Soldiers and protect and promote our national interests. In this era of persistent conflict, we must increase our efforts to develop each of our leaders, and we must ensure that we are managing our most talented leaders to lead our Army into the future.<sup>34</sup>

Army Leader Development Strategy must be considered as ground zero as the best venue to communicate an integrated and coordinated effort to implement targeted and meaningful strategies aimed at deconflicting issues between the generations and capturing efficiencies in the future. The Army Leader Development Strategy used to provide guidance and vision with Training and Doctrine Command as the proponent for integration of the strategy, it would not only have the right analysis and credibility, but would also have the “teeth” required for thorough and adequate implementation.

In regards to applicability in implementation for enlisted Soldiers the architecture already exists. For enlisted soldiers, the Initial Military Training Command, a subordinate unit to TRADOC, is responsible for all enlisted Basic Recruit Training and their subsequent following Advanced Individual Training for their military occupation specialty training. As enlisted soldiers progress in their careers, they eventually enter the Non-Commissioned Officer Education System. A tiered based strategy focused on implementing generational theory strategies could be seamlessly integrated. This system is a progression based series non-commissioned officers are required to complete as outlined in the Army Posture Statement:

The current Non-Commissioned Officer Education System (NCOES) is a military education system that maintains a blend of leadership and technical training to develop leaders for current and future requirements of the Army within the context of an Army at war and Joint and expeditionary capabilities. Warrior Leader Course, the first line leader course through which Soldiers transition to NCOs possessed of the knowledge and skills that will enable them to be technically and tactically proficient leaders. Basic NCO Course (BNCOC), through which section and squad leaders become masters of their military occupational specialties (MOSs) as well as expert trainers and training managers. BNCOC focuses on leading and training inside the platoon formation and provides the initial exposure to core staff skills needed inside the battalion formation. Advanced NCO Course, focusing on equipping the platoon sergeant for leading and training inside the company formation and expanding the NCO's staff skills to those needed inside the brigade formation. Sergeants Major Course, the capstone of the NCOES that aims to produce senior NCOs with the ability to lead in combat and manage at battalion and higher levels.<sup>35</sup>

Officers have a similar educational track known as the Officer Education System which would easily facilitate generational strategies. The goal of the Officer Education System as seen in the Army Posture Statement is as follows:

The Officer Education System is the progressive and sequential education and training process for officers in the Army that begins in the pre commissioning phase and continues in schools at the basic entry level, captain level, intermediate command and staff level, and senior level. Basic Officer Leader Course, which develops competent and confident junior leaders who, regardless of branch, are imbued with the warrior ethos, grounded in field craft, and skilled in leading small units. Captains Career Course, which prepares senior company grade officers to successfully command at company level and serve effectively in staff positions at battalion and brigade level. Intermediate Level Education, which succeeded the Command and General Staff Officer Course, and through which majors are better prepared for full-spectrum operations in a Joint, interagency, and multinational environment. Army War College, through which selected senior officers are prepared for the responsibilities of strategic leadership.<sup>36</sup>

While the purpose of outlining the educational requirements for enlisted soldiers and officers is not meant to be a diatribe, it is necessary to highlight the broad ranging power and authority of the Army Leader Development Strategy and the applicability as the primary means to implement an integrated generational modernization strategy. The architecture and oversight is already in place required to effect meaningful updates to the way junior soldiers are trained and educated.

## KEY ELEMENTS TO A COMPREHENSIVE GENERATIONAL MODERIZATION STRATEGY

The main components associated with an effective strategy aimed at modernizing the U.S. Army in regards to generational differences and the human dimension are twofold. First and most importantly, an aggressive strategy must be targeted at initial entry soldiers and officers to modernize the training methods, facilities and equipment so they are commensurate with technology and the individuals' schemas today and tomorrow. This strategy must be based on the capabilities that will be required of soldiers 5-10 years in the future. Outdated and expired methods of training and instruction require more time, money, force structure to support and are less effective. Secondly, a credible strategy must be implemented to better orient and educate mid level and senior leaders to better understand, relate to and lead future younger generations of soldiers. Strategies can be integrated and be sound in concept, but without senior leader support and endorsement as to their benefits, efficiencies and ability to create better performing organizations, the efforts will likely "die on the vine." The human dimension of training, education and leadership must be considered every bit as important as the work that goes into developing the task, conditions, standard and objective for a particular training objective. Simply put, younger generations have routinely exhibited attributes that they are capable of mastering the most difficult of tasks quickly if taught and instructed in methods consistent with their attributes, lifestyle and technology already incorporated in their lives.

### Education, Training and Leader Development for Junior Soldiers

Using doctrine, organization, training, material, leadership, personnel and facilities (DOTMLPF) as an objective framework in which to best implement generational strategies,

there must be a fundamental focus on modernizing training methods, equipment (material) and facilities in order to harness the potential of younger generations, starting with initial entry training for soldiers and officers. Evidence suggests that Generation Y and more so with Generation Next, respond best to a student oriented style of instruction based on collaboration versus a teacher based system of instruction.<sup>37</sup> They want to share their experiences, thoughts and opinions from each other and as a result they learn faster from the group than from an instructor at the front of the classroom shadowed by Powerpoint. Later in their careers, perhaps in combat, these same young soldiers will likely operate in volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous situations in the same manner that comes naturally to them; collaboratively. They are extraverted in nature.<sup>38</sup> Training plans consisting of 65 modules of Power Point instruction of tasks, conditions and standards followed by a GO/NO GO testing are outdated, diatribe, inefficient and insulting to younger generations. Initial training in the U.S. Army must be modernized to reflect the world younger generations come from, live in and are connected to.

Another recommendation in line with these findings would be to incorporate a learning model based on social media that expands upon the pilot program launched by the AIT Brigade Commander mentioned previously. Given the staggering success of using an IPOD based interactive training scenarios, it could be further expanded to be linked with social media to share progress, answer questions or further explain procedures for a certain task. This technology needs little development; it is technology that is available today as the younger Generations are already using it given their insatiable appetite for venues to communicate such as Facebook and Twitter. The U.S. Army needs to harness this innate tendency and maximize their potential.



## Training and Education for Mid Level and Senior Leaders

When considering an approach to train and educate mid level and senior leaders of how to best cope with and capitalize on the generational differences within their ranks, a DOTMLPF assessment highlights the need for consideration of nearly every aspect. Doctrine that prescribes how units train and fight must be thoroughly studied and reviewed to capture those generational differences which are no longer valid and identify those which are missing. Organization and organizations need to be closely reviewed, as in the case of the AIT Brigade commander found, he could reduce the size of his cadre based on the trainee's ability to meet course requirements early. A shorter course requires less force structure to staff it. The savings in this aspect alone Army wide are potentially groundbreaking considering the budget constrained environment ahead and the fact that Congress traditionally scrutinizes service end strengths ad nauseum. This is free force structure for the taking for deployable units and critical interests. Training for senior leaders needs to address and educate them how to best deal with the younger generations in order to manage expectations, motivate and lead them in the years ahead. Although material largely needs to be focused on the youngest generations, it is critical that senior leaders at a minimum are familiar with what their soldiers are using and understand its capabilities.

Inherent in the training of senior leaders on generational differences, leadership has and will continue to play a critical role in the implementation of this strategy. Key leaders must internalize and "buy in" on the credibility and potential efficiencies with such a program. Leading companies such as Google, Apple and Merrill Lynch all has acknowledged and actively sought to implement strategies to better understand and that capitalize on what the

younger generations have to offer. 60MINS CBS's 60 Minutes estimates that the industry associated with understanding, motivating and rewarding younger generations is a 50 billion dollar a year industry.<sup>39</sup> Personnel must be addressed and considered in regards to DOTMLPF to best capture how organizations will change as a result of the implementation of new technologies. It is no secret that technology often reduces workloads considerably and achieves efficiencies that humans otherwise would be unable to attain. These changes are certain to effect how personnel are assigned and distributed within organizations. Facilities must also be a focus of investment in a coherent, aggressive and effective generational strategy. Along with equipping young soldiers with new technology, facilities in relation must also reflect how younger generations learn, train and live. Training facilities must reflect the innovative and leading technologies of today; not just at the national training centers, but Army wide.

## CONCLUSION

It may appear outrageous and irresponsible during periods of severe budget constraints to propose substantial investments in an unproven soft science, the evidence and research illustrates that initiatives targeted to capitalize on the attributes are a proven means to achieve considerable efficiencies. Considering this, such an investment at such a critical time is likely to yield savings and value added well beyond expectations. Given numerous predictions of what the contemporary operating environment will look like over the next 10-15 years, it is clear that there will be no shortage of difficulty and tenuous situations. Couple this with that fact that the generation gap has grown much larger and that in five years, the services will be comprised of four distinct generations. Never before have the

most junior personnel been more diametrically different from their senior leaders, with those generations in between pulled in different directions. These circumstances together will create the perfect storm, or the perhaps the perfect opportunity now if immediate action is taken.

An aggressive generational strategy must be implemented starting with the Army Leader Development Strategy. The non commissioned officer education system and the officer education system already provide the framework in which to jump start such a strategy. Within that strategy, it must modernize the equipment, methods and techniques that are used to train initial entry personnel. Consequently, an equally robust program must be undertaken to educate senior leaders on the benefits of adopting such initiatives and the ramifications for not capitalizing on them. Studies must be done using the DOTMLPF framework to identify the holistic changes that are sure to result from the increased efficiencies and plan for them accordingly for catastrophic success with this strategy. As an organization, the U.S. Army must widen its aperture to well beyond the solid metrics of equipment and weapon capabilities and truly invest in the potential of the human dimension and the attributes of younger generations akin to the untapped oil reserves of Anwar.

## ENDNOTES

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